

# INTERIOR. LEATHER BAR.

## LOGLINE

Filmmakers James Franco and Travis Mathews re-imagine the lost 40 minutes from “Cruising” as a starting point to a broader exploration of sexual and creative freedom.

## SYNOPSIS

In order to avoid an X rating, 40 minutes of gay S&M footage was rumored to be cut and destroyed from the controversial 1980 film, “Cruising.” Actor Val Lauren reluctantly agrees to take the lead in filmmaker James Franco’s and Travis Mathews’ reimagining of the lost footage.

Amid the backdrop of a chaotic film set Val is repeatedly forced to negotiate his boundaries during scenes on and “off camera,” some involving unsimulated gay sex. The film itself is constructed as a play with boundaries remaining queer in subject and form. As much a film about filmmaking as it is about an exploration of sexual and creative freedom, “Interior. Leather Bar.” defies easy categorization.

## DIRECTORS STATEMENT

### James Franco

I wanted to be taken on a ride. I wanted to make a film that was as much about the experience as it was about making something. I wanted to go to a place of uncertainty, to set up parameters and then let the movie make itself. I wanted to explore the beauty of queerness, beautiful because it is counter to everything normal. As “straight” becomes the new “gay,” I wanted to find places where the anti-normative still thrived. Travis became my partner and guide on a trip to the queer-side.

### Travis Mathews

One of the first things that James and I ever talked about was gay marriage. We shared a concern that the race toward equality was also a race of straightening out the queer kinks, of erasing subcultures in favor of assimilation. It’s a conversation captured in the opening scene of the film, one that “helps inform choices” as I say. In a lot of ways this became the foundation of the film, this idea that we’d make a queer film about a gay subculture that was as much a celebration of as it was an agitator. Yes, there is gay sex in the film, but it’s the slippery way in which boundaries and definitions are in constant flux that really make it a queer film for me.

We took the mythology of a still controversial film, “Cruising” (1980), and the rumored-to-be-lost 40 minutes from the original cut of that film, as an opening for this exploration. But our film is neither a remake nor a dedicated 40 minutes of re-imagined lost footage. It’s so much more about our process of constructing this film and the mercurial ways in which the film itself **defies easy categorization**. Is it real or is it fake, is it art or is it porn, and where exactly does one bleed into the other?

But as slippery as the film is, I was never interested in a “gotcha” moment that duped the audience. From the beginning I wanted to dropshine a light on the construction, to pull back the proverbial curtain between us and the audience. If people embraced the artifice, I reasoned, they’d start hunting for moments of authenticity. The actors are on a parallel journey constantly sorting out personal boundaries and sexual identities while trying to understand what it IS that we’re actually filming. James and I were no different, sometimes reaching for the map but just as often choosing to go without it.

## **PRODUCTION NOTES**

[A conversation between Keith Wilson and Travis Mathews]

### **BIOS**

#### **James Franco - Co-director**

[to come?]

#### **Travis Mathews - Co-director**

Travis Mathews is an award-winning filmmaker whose movies focus on gay men and intimacy. Informed with a Masters in Counseling Psychology and a background in documentary, Travis takes a thoughtful and naturalistic approach to filmmaking while maintaining a sense of humor in his work. In 2009 Travis started an ongoing documentary series called IN THEIR ROOM about gay men and bedrooms. The first of several episodes was filmed in [San Francisco](#), followed by [Berlin](#) (2010) and more recently, London (2012). Ira Sachs (KEEP THE LIGHTS ON) calls the series, "deeply intimate" and credits Mathews with "a kind and empathetic eye as a filmmaker and a new voice needed to tell our stories." John Cameron Mitchell (SHORT BUS) refers to Mathews as "refreshingly honest, a new voice giving queer cinema a much needed injection of emotional intimacy."

In 2010 TLA awarded Mathews' narrative short, I WANT YOUR LOVE, "Best Short" honors. The feature version of the same name played dozens of festivals worldwide in 2012. Andrew Haigh (WEEKEND) calls I WANT YOUR LOVE (2011), Mathews' feature debut, "a bold film with rare insight into the uncensored lives of a generation of gay men."

#### **Keith Wilson - Director of Photography**

Keith Wilson is a director, cinematographer and photographer based in San Francisco. His documentaries [The Shrimp](#), [When the Light's Red](#), [Southern Family](#) and [Lesbian Grandmothers From Mars](#) have broadcast on PBS stations, cable television and been screened in numerous festivals including the Berlin, London, South by Southwest and New York Underground Film Festivals and at the U.S. National Gallery of Art. After shooting numerous award-winning documentary films, I WANT YOUR LOVE is his first narrative feature as director of photography. As a photographer, his work has been exhibited in solo and group shows internationally, was an Art Forum Critic's Pick and will be featured at the Gagosian Gallery in New York City in March 2013. His series *Hyde Park Apartments* was published as a monograph (Publication Studio, 2011) and he was the photographer for *Apocalypse Cakes, Recipes for the End Times* (Running Press, 2011). Keith has an MFA in film production from the University of

Texas-Austin where he was a University and Jesse Jones Fellow.

### **Val Lauren - actor**

A Los Angeles native, Val Lauren began by training and performing original plays at the Playhouse West Repertory Theater. He simultaneously worked on television shows and independent films including the Sundance Institute film "True Love" directed by Henry Barrial. Val made his writing/directorial debut with the award winning short film "HELP", about a man on the night he sets off on a mission to save his dying Mother's life, in which he also starred.

"SAL" marks Val Lauren's first film collaboration with James Franco as a director. Val played the title role in the bio pic about Sal Mineo which Premiered at the Venice (Italy) Film Festival and is due out in theaters in 2013. Val recently finished a sold out run of the original play "No Way Around But Through". He directed and starred in it opposite Scott Caan and Melanie Griffith, produced by Garry Marshall and Mike O'Malley. Currently, Val is filming "The Last Knights" opposite Clive Owen and Morgan Freeman, due out in theaters in 2013.

### **FILMOGRAPHY**

James Franco  
Travis Mathews  
Keith Wilson  
Val Lauren

### **BLURBS**

*Awesome and complicated and strange and avant garde* - Gus Van Sant

### **PRESS**